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THE DREAM OF A CHURCH MOUSE



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"To you certainly not."
"Then I'll excommunicate you."

See page 8.

ST. JOHN, N. B.:
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THE DREAM

OF A

CHURCH MOUSE.

I had a dream, a wondrous dream,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
Methought they tried to bring me back
To chains of slavery.

Yes, I dreamed that I, a church mouse, compelled by the force of circumstances, had been obliged to make a retreat behind one of the stones built into the old church wall, a stone very much hid in a corner, and bearing this inscription—"Article number six." I chose this situation because it is a stone so frequently overlooked by people *in* the church, and apparently utterly unknown to those *without** Methought that I was musing on the sundry and manifold chances and changes of this mortal life, when suddenly I was startled by a number of church cats wildly running to and fro, with tails in a state of great perpendicularity, and dilated to the dimensions of the largest Roman Candle. They were making the most hideous and discordant noises, as far removed as possible from sacred music, and their caterwauling resounded throughout the whole church. Their object was to frighten me out of my refuge, but in vain, for I had been forewarned by my ancestral great grandfathers, and, therefore, I only smiled a placid small smile at their antics, and went on with my musings. Finding they could not succeed in their feline attempts, they departed,

*The Sixth Article of Religion of the Church of England reads thus: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

and in some secret nook of the building held a conference, the subject and object of their deliberations being myself. The results of the congress will appear as we go on.

Some little time had passed away, when one evening I heard a whisper at the entrance of my narrow "retreat." It was the voice of a cat clad in the most gorgeous vestments, and on his head a "biretta."

"Mousey, dear," said he.

"Well," said I, "what do you want?"

"Won't you come out and have a little talk with us? we feel extremely anxious about your welfare; we think it is not good for you to dwell alone in that close, confined place you have chosen. Come out into the 'broad' and free air which *we* enjoy; come with us and we will do you good."

"Oh, yes, no doubt you will, you are thirsting for my blood, I'll be bound."

"Oh, don't say so, Mousey, dear, that's an unkind remark, and shows a great want of charity on your part."

"Pussy, dear," said I, "you are very kind; your benevolent and feline intentions are really quite touching, and the affection you display towards a poor little mouse like me is beyond all praise; but how can I come with you? I have no garments of my own to wear. I am poor and humble, and not fit to mix in such 'high' company."

"Oh, we will find you vestments; all these things will we give thee if thou wilt come with us! See, here is a 'cassock,' and a 'tunicle,' and a 'chasuble,' and a 'surplice.'"

"Yes; but may I not have a 'dalmatic,' and an 'alb' as well?"

"Oh, yes, of course!"

"And a 'cotta,' and 'biretta'?"

"Certainly."

"And a tippet,' and a 'cope'?"

"Yes, yes."

"And a muff?"

"Muff! well, we haven't any muffs, you know."

"Haven't you? oh, I thought you had *plenty*!"

"Oh, dear, no, that's quite a mistake!" he innocently replied.

"Well, but *after all*, on consideration, is it absolutely necessary to have all these vestments?"

"Of course it is. 'Catholic' principles could not pos-

sibly be propagated *without* them, neither could we perform our manifold *functions*."

"Oh, well, I want a black gown!"

"Black gown!" he screamed out, horrified at the idea; "black gown! are you mad? What a horrid '*low*' idea! Why, to wear a black gown would be to commit a mortal sin! I am astonished and confounded at the wretched, heretical thought. I'm afraid your education has been sadly neglected: you don't seem to have any conception of '*Catholic*' principles."

"Oh," I remarked, innocently, "I thought the outward appearance was not so important a matter! I thought God looked upon the *heart*: but, however, as I should not feel comfortable without a black gown, I think I had better stay where I am a little longer, and in the meantime I will 'search the Scriptures,' and try to find out who the woman is that was dressed in purple and scarlet-colored robes, and other elaborate adornments; and I will also try to find out what sort of boat it was that Peter the fisherman girt about him when he jumped into the sea in his eager anxiety to go to Jesus."

"Ugh! you '*low*' creature," he snarled out, and vanished in the darkness.

* * * * *

After this, I looked, and, lo! through my chink I beheld another cat standing before me, and he carried a censer. Scratching at the wall to attract my attention, he thus whispered:

"Mousey, dear!"

"Here'ain I," I replied.

"You never come out to enjoy the privileges of the Church. Here is some sweet-smelling perfume; allow me to cense you."

"Well, I do rather like sweet-smelling things, such as, for instance, 'ointment poured forth,'" I replied, "and I have thought sometimes that I should like to get a sniff of this incense, about which I have heard so much."

With that he began to swing his censer about till the whole church was filled with smoke; but somehow or other, I suppose because I was so "*low*," it would not come nigh unto me, it seemed as if it had a tendency to go upwards, so that the people in the "*high*" seats got all the benefit of it, whatever that might be; so I said to this functionary:

"Is it absolutely necessary to salvation, this incense?"

"Well, I think so; the '*church*' teaches that all '*Catholic*' usages are indispensable."

"If so, then how is it that I can't get a sniff of it?"

"Why, because you will persist in keeping to these old Protestant hiding-places of yours. Fancy your choosing such a place for a nest as that old '*Article number six*.' Now, if you will take my advice, you will come out of that; it must be very cold for your feet and very hard to lie down upon; we should like to remove a part of that stone by chiselling it away, and substituting some '*wood, hay and stubble*,' but of course as long as you stick *there* you frustrate our intentions."

"Thank you very much," I said, "but you know '*wood, hay, and stubble*,' are all things that lie on the surface, and almost anybody can get them; but stone, precious stone, is not to be so easily got at. You have to seek and labor very diligently for that kind of material, and I rather like to feel my feet on the '*rock*;' and if the church should one day be set on fire, you know my precious stone would abide, but your work would be burned, and you would suffer loss, and though very likely you might escape the fire, you would be horribly singed."

"Am I, then, to consider that you don't want kind offices in the church?"

"Exactly so. '*Incense* is an abomination unto me.' I detest your unauthorized weapons of warfare, and I've done without you and your incense for more than three hundred years, so the sooner you go the better."

And he too disappeared from my sight as his predecessor had done.

* * * * *

But I was not long to enjoy repose, for after awhile I was roused by a clanking noise. Whatever could it be? I looked, and, behold, *another* cat!—a black, sinister-looking fellow he was, though his *voice* was strangely soft and captivating. I can't very well remember how he was dressed, but he had a rope round his waist, to which was attached a huge bunch of keys and also a large crucifix. I suppose the clanking of the keys was the noise that awakened me from my dozing. I found out afterwards that they called this one the "*Doctor*," though why he should be considered a doctor I don't know, unless his office was to "*minister to minds diseased*."

"You little mouse," he said, "listen to me."

"I am all attention," said I; "but who are you?"

"I am a priest of the most High God."

"Oh, indeed! Is your name Melchisedek? Called for the 'tithes,' I presume?"

"Not so, I am a Father Confessor."

"Oh, indeed! well, what are you going to confess? I don't remember that you've wronged *me* in any way."

"Child, you don't *understand*; I *receive* confessions; I want you to confess all your sins to *me*."

"But the Bible says, 'if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;' doesn't the word *He* mean the Lord Jesus?"

"Doubtless, but I am in the *place* of Jesus to you, and you know we are commanded to confess our sins."

"Yes, we are, I know, but I should'nt have thought by the look of you, that you are just and faithful; by the bye, I think I remember a text something like this—'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.'"

"Well—ah—yes, perhaps there is; but doesn't St. James tell us to confess?"

"Yes, he does; he says, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.' Now then, in the first place, I'm not *sick*, and secondly, I I didn't *send* for *you*, remember; but if you'll confess your sins to me first, I'll pray for *you*, and then I'll confess to you and you shall pray for *me*."

"Absurd, 'Low,' un-Catholic idea! Don't you know I possess the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and that I have power to condemn you and power to release you?"

"Well, I think I have heard those words, or some very much like them, *before*. Didn't Pontius Pilate say them to Jesus in the judgment hall, and you remember the answer, don't you? 'Thou couldest have no power at all, except it were given thee from above.' Are you quite sure you have the power?"

"How dare you *doubt* it? the 'Catholic Church' teaches it, and that is sufficient, is it not?"

"Sufficient for *you*, perhaps, but not for *me*, and considering that I've done without you for so long a time, and further considering that I find no record of systematic and methodical confession (such as you would introduce) in the earliest history of the church, and believing as I do that your impertinent questions and abominable suggestions tend to pollute instead of purifying the heart, I think we can very well dispense with your services *now*."

"Then you won't confess?"

"To *you*, certainly not."

"Then I'll *excommunicate* you."

"That you are quite at liberty to do if you like, but you can't *excommunicate* me, you know, so take my advice; and 'go to a nunnery, to a nunnery go!'"

And I suppose he *did* go to a nunnery, for he quickly vanished from my gaze, to my inexpressible relief."

* * * * *

After him came another, and he carried a bag.

"If you please," said he, "I am collecting the offertory, be so good as to put your alms into this bag,"

"Not if I know it," said I.

"Why not, pray?"

"Because I prefer a '*decent bason*.'"

"But this is so much better, you know. No one knows what you put in, and besides it is in accordance with '*Catholic*' usage."

"And *Apostolic* too, isn't it!" I remarked.

"Well, I don't know."

"Oh, indeed! permit me to refresh your memory: was there not an apostle named Judas Iscariot?"

"Well, there might have been, perhaps, but I don't remember reading of him in the lives of the saints."

"No, he was one of the *sinner*s, and you will find the record of this thief in the New Testament: he carried the bag; he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver; he was covetous, and he went to hell! So you see your bag is calculated to call up unpleasant recollections. Good day to you." And off he went, speechless.

* * * * *

After his departure came another, ringing a bell.

"What's all that noise about?" said I.

"We are about to celebrate the mass in this church," he replied.

"Do you mean the Lord's Supper, commonly called Holy Communion?"

"If you choose to call it so, yes."

"Well, but I have not had even my breakfast yet."

"Oh, you must receive the sacred elements *fasting*!"

"What's that for?"

"It's the teaching of the '*Catholic*' Church."

"Is it necessary to salvation?"

"Of course it is; the *Church* cannot err."

"But I thought it was after supper Jesus took the

bread and the cup, and gave to His disciples, saying, '*do this.*'"

"Yes, but that was *before* breakfast, and that would be an early celebration, you know."

"I beg your pardon, it would be a very *late* celebration at midnight. Surely you must remember what transpired between that time and daylight; the washing of the disciples' feet, the long conversation, the prayer and agony in the garden, the seizure of the Lord, and escort (by soldiers bearing *lanterns* and *torches*) to the High Priest's palace. Why were torches used if it were daylight? [No answer.] "But waiving that," I said, "let me see *how* you celebrate."

"Well, we burn a great many candles on the altar."

"Did you say *a'tar*?" I interposed.

"Yes," he replied.

"Well, I know the Jewish priests burnt the *fat* on the altar, but I don't remember that they ever made it into *candles* first, and I was not aware that in a Christian Church there was such a thing as an altar, or a sacrificing priest; our High Priest, Jesus, left us an example that we should follow in His steps, and I certainly don't remember that he ever offered any sacrifice but *Himself*, and that not on an *altar*, but on the Cross. But pardon my interruption," I said, "and proceed with your description of the ceremony."

"Well, then, allow me to offer you this consecrated wafer, I have 'reserved' it for you."

"Thank you, no, I don't like *reservations*; perhaps you have '*lifted it up*,' too," I said.

"Well, only as high as my head."

"And worshipped it?"

"Oh, yes, I have adored it, and teach others to do so too."

"And why do you do this?"

"Because of the real presence of our Lord Jesus in the bread of the altar."

"Do you mean to say, that Jesus is in this wafer, and if I eat this wafer I eat Jesus Christ?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Then the way to the heart is through the stomach, is it not?"

"Pshaw! you are irreverent and un-Catholic in speaking thus of holy and sacred things."

"No, I am not: God has told us, 'The just shall live by faith;' 'Hear, and your soul shall live.'"

"Yes, yes ; but what did Jesus Himself say?—'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.' And did he not say, 'This is My body,' when He gave the bread to them?"

"I know He *said* so, but he *meant* it as a symbol ; but now, since you believe this wafer is Jesus Christ, who is now in heaven, what do you think of this? You have heard of a mountain being in labor, and bringing forth a mouse, do you believe that?"

"Pshaw! that's fable."

"True, but what would you say if I told you Mount Sinai, in Arabia, once conceived and brought forth a son, and called his name Ishmael?"

"Ridiculous! Why Ishmael was the son of Hagar, Sarah's maid, everybody knows that."

"Well, I can assure you that this Hagar is Mount Sinai, *it is written*, and the Scriptures cannot be broken."

"Ah, well, I am not going to argue, but to celebrate! You refuse the water, then, I suppose?"

"I do, certainly; it is not ordinary bread in common use."

"Well, permit me to offer you some wine."

"But is it the *best* wine, and unadulterated?"

"Of course there is a portion of *water* mixed with it, as the *Catholic Church* teaches there should be."

"And why should there be water mixed with it?"

"Oh—why—well, the body of our Saviour was pierced, as you know, and there came out blood and water."

"Yes, that's all very true, of course I know *that*; but what has that to do with it?"

"To do with it? You horrify me by your profane remarks: why *everything*: this cup contains the blood of Christ, as He said, 'This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'"

"I know as well as you do that He said those words, and, again, I say it was only *symbol*, as the very next verse clearly proves, where He goes on to say, 'I will not drink henceforth of this *fruit* of the vine,' &c., &c.; and more than that, the words were spoken by the Saviour *before* His death, *before* the soldiers pierced His side; and what is of great importance to remember is this, that no man ever dreamed of drinking *that* blood and water, as I think even you yourself will freely admit; and, therefore, I say you have no right to say the wafer is the body of Christ, or the wine is the blood of Christ. The whole thing is a 'blasphemous fable and a dangerous

deceit,' for Jesus said, 'I am the *living* bread,' and on your own showing the wafer bread is only a dead body which you have created and you have put to death, because, remember, no sacrifice was ever eaten *alive*. Oh, ye blind guides, when will you understand that the food for the soul comes not in at the nose, or mouth, but by the ears? 'The flesh profiteth nothing, THE WORDS THAT I SPEAK UNTO YOU they are spirit, and they are life.'"

"Well, certainly, you are one of the most 'unmitigated Protestants I ever came nigh; but do you mean to say, then, there is no benefit at all in this ordinance of the Church?"

"I mean to say that it is the duty of every Christian to do as his Lord and Master commands him, and I believe that a blessing always follows loving obedience, for wherever two or three are gathered together in His name there is Jesus in the midst of them to give them peace and joy, and to cause them to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, and I also believe that it is our bounden duty to do this in remembrance of His death, and never to give it up till He comes again."

The only answer to this was a violent ringing of the bell, which was perhaps the best way he could devise to escape out of the difficulty and conceal his chagrin, and so he went ringing away.

* * * * *

Scarcely had the sound of the bell died away in the distance, when it came to pass that I was startled by the sound of many feet marching. I looked through my aperture, and, lo! I beheld—a procession! The parties composing it were dressed in every variety of colored garments; some carrying censers, some bouquets of flowers, some with crosses, brazen and wooden, some with banners. Thus they paraded themselves before the admiring eyes of a large number of "silly women" and "unstable" men, singing as they went, to please themselves and those who listened. One might have thought, to see and hear them, that they were a company of faithful and valiant soldiers, (clad as they were in such splendid uniforms,) who were valiant for the truth; but, no, they had come forth without the one thing needful, that trusty weapon, "the sword of the Spirit."

"Surely, after all," the thought occurred to me, "I am the foe whom they seek to destroy." And so indeed it

proved to be; for halting before my retreat, they began to address themselves one after another to me thus:—

"Are you still there, mousey!" they began.

"Here am I," I replied; "but what in the name of common sense does all this 'pomp and circumstance of war' mean?"

"Mean? why we want you to join us, of course, so come out at once, and enlist under our banners."

"But why don't you come in to *me*, and give up all that sort of thing?"

"Why, you dear little insignificant mouse, it is simply impossible with all these banners, vestments, and other paraphernalia; yours is such a strait gate and *narrow* way, so *inelastic*, and besides it is so *low* we couldn't possibly stoop down to it; and if we *did*, what should we gain by it? We are 'rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;' but you, why you are poor and miserable!"

"Well, but now stop a bit, there seems a very great company of you, to judge by the noise you make in the church."

"Oh! that's no proof of numbers; we cats, you know, are noted for discordant and loud voices; why two of us at any time could make more noise than two hundred of *your* family!"

"Yes, so it seems, and some members of my family are very much annoyed by your dreadful discord, and somewhat *alarmed* too, for they seem to think you want the church all to yourselves, and that *your* family are bent on *exterminating* my family."

"Well, well, never mind that now, we'll *evade* that question if you please, but come out and have a little pleasure; what do you say to a trip down the river?"

"Oh! I so dearly love the water! 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God; but what river do you propose to row or sail upon.'"

"Oh, the Tiber, of course!"

"But that is a long way off—in Italy, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's in Italy, but it is here too. Do you not know that we have cut a canal from the ancient stream, and that it reaches even to Oxford? So, if you'll only come to Oxford, you know, you may step aboard at once and it's all plain sailing."

"You are well supplied with boats, then, I presume?"

"Boats, oh, yes, I should think we are, an 7 quantity of them; there is the E.C.U., the C.B.S., the A P.U.C., and

some others; these are all the *larger* craft: and then we have a quantity of smaller ones, classified under the names of Guilds, Sisterhoods, Institutes, Orphanages, and so on, they'll any one of them carry you safely to ——."

"To where?" I said.

"Well—ahem!—why, to the —— I mean down the Tiber, of course!"

"And who's going to steer?"

"Oh, we've lots of Italian pilots, dressed like Englishmen!"

"Disguised, are they?"

"Well, very thinly; some of them are beginning to throw off their disguises now, and show themselves in their true colors."

"Well, that is preferable, I think; it is certainly much the best way to 'provide things honest in the sight of all men.' But now, if I go with you, you'll find room in the boat for the great old CHURCH BIBLE, for, of course, I shall want something to read on the way?"

"Now, don't be a simpleton," they all replied; "why, *that would swamp the best boat we've got*; we've been obliged to throw that overboard many a time, but if you want any reading, we can find you plenty of '*Catholic*' literature, thoroughly saturated with Churchianity; for instance, there's 'the *Tract for the Times*,' '*The Doctor's Eirenicon*,' '*The Church Times*,' '*The Ritual Reason Why*,' and scores of similar publications."

"Oh, yes, I know, their name is legion, for they are many, but what is the chaff to the wheat? Give me my book of books, if you please."

"But what right have you to judge for yourself? The Church is commissioned to teach the world, and surely you must admit '*the Church*' existed before the Bible, and cannot err!"

"Indeed! how can you prove to me that the Church existed before the Bible?"

"How? why the Bible itself tells us *that*!"

"Thank you very much indeed, that's *my* case; but that's not *all* my case. 'Adam was first formed, then Eve,' and as the husband is the head of the wife, so let the Church be subject to Christ in all things; and just be pleased to remember what a husband once said to his bride, 'without *me* ye can do nothing;' therefore I say Christianity first, and Churchianity afterwards, and that, if you please, is the *Protestant Reason Why*."

These words seemed to strike them all dumb—at all

events there was no answer; but instead they began to whisper among themselves as to what they should do next.

"Oh, if we could only get him out of his refuge we would soon have the Church down to the ground!"

"Yes, and short work we would make of him and his Bible, if once we had him in our power!"

"If we *could* but *disestablish* him, then the work would be easy enough, but it seems almost hopeless to expect it."

And thus they went on discussing the matter, while I was quietly listening to all they said. At length, thinking it high time to put a stop to it, I thus spake—

"If I were to decide to go with you, are you quite sure I should not be shipwrecked?"

"Oh, we'll undertake that you shall be perfectly safe and well taken care of during the voyage, and we pledge ourselves—nay, we hereby swear *by our blessed lady*, that you shall be safely landed at Rome!"

"Aha! at *Rome*!—aha! I thought so; and now then the cat is fairly out of the bag, and now I am no longer in doubt about who it is that are 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.' Well, my dear friends," I said, "I have heard all your words, and very '*Catholic*' they are. I freely admit, but I don't think yours is a *more excellent way* than mine after all; I scarcely think the time has yet come for the cat and mouse to drink milk out of the same saucer, or for the Harlot and the Virgin to walk together, so you will excuse me for saying, '*In this Church of England I am, and here I will remain,*' despite all the Church cats in Christendom! And now, oh, ye miserable comforters, go! Go, get you gone out of the Church, for I expect Queen Elizabeth here every minute, and you know if she were to come and catch you here ——"

But before I could complete the sentence, with one wild and terrific yell, they all skurried off helter-skelter up the chancel and over the Lord's table, smashing the glass in the windows, and knocking down and utterly destroying their own beloved "*Baldacchino*," as they scrambled out and disappeared in the direction of Rome, from whence they came.

* * * * *

After they were gone I came out of my "retreat," and quietly looked round, for the day had begun to break, and the light of the sun was beginning to stream through the

apertures of the broken windows, and, oh! the wreck they had made of my beautiful church! The pews were all gone! the walls were daubed with untempered mortar; in vain I looked for the pulpit, it was no where to be seen: the floor was strewn with fragments of torn and tattered black gowns, which they in their self-willed anger had destroyed! The Lord's table had, by some mighty effort, been lifted up out of the body of the church, and carried to the top of a lofty flight of steps, and left there, like a stranded vessel, *high and dry!* The Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments, where were they? They, too, had disappeared; in fact, there had been a general "turning of things upside down." I was forced to drop a tear as I silently and slowly returned to my retreat, a sadder, but not a wiser mouse.

* * * * *

Then methought I laid me down in hopes to sleep, but the tears would still fall, and I could obtain no rest, although I felt wearied and worn, both in body and in mind. As I lay thus, lo! suddenly the church appeared to be filled with light far above the brightness of the sun, and there stood before me a form as of a man clothed in white raiment, so pure and dazzling in its whiteness that my eyes could not without pain gaze upon it. His countenance was transcendently beautiful, and his voice was the sweetest music my ears had ever heard.

"Friend, why weepest thou?" he said. "I weep for the sad state of my beautiful Church," I replied. "Alas! the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously, but who art thou?" "My name is John," he replied, "and I am an ambassador from the King of kings, from Him whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good; fear not, therefore; and be not weary in well-doing, for your redemption draweth nigh. But I have a message for thee." "A message, did you say?" "Even so: see, therefore, that thou fail not to deliver it. Fare you well!"

With that he handed to me a letter, and vanished from my sight.

* * * * *

When I had somewhat recovered from my astonishment, I looked at it, and found it was addressed on the outside as follows:—"To the Angel of the Church of

England." "As it was unsealed, I opened it and read the contents, which ran thus—"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

And hereupon I suddenly awoke. Lo! this is the dream, but what is the interpretation thereof?